

## **BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM'S (BEP) ORIENTATION/OPEN HOUSE MEETING**

### **JANUARY 11, 2017 MEETING MINUTES**

#### **GUESTS/ATTENDEES:**

**NEW CASTLE COUNTY:** Kerriann Pringle, Malvern Slawter, Lois Alston, Loretta Harper-Brown, Lynn Schneider, Mark Russ, Juanita Stroman, Kelvin Fields, Shirley Bryson, Genelle Fletcher, Romy Mikhail, Robert Paddy, Wayne Marsh, Kathryn Bottner

**KENT COUNTY:** Christy Bazemore, Linda Eden, Larry Morgan, Derek Alexander, Anthony Paolini, Amber Mangini, Rob Schmidlkofer, Eric McCleary, Crystal McCleary

**SUSSEX COUNTY:** Patricia Burrell, David Weathersby, Amy Layfield, Deb Brad, Gary Warren, Cereza Hansley, Amy Layfield, Deb Bradl

#### **CALL TO ORDER**

- Mr. Rob Schmidlkofer did a role call by County. He started the session off by explaining how the BEP program is a storied program that became law in 1936 to give the blind an opportunity to independently operate their own business and become an entrepreneur. Mr. Schmidlkofer introduced himself as the BEP director and explained that the purpose for this orientation was to explain the Delaware Code Title 16 Sec. 9606- "Food service in public office buildings", as well as the Randolph-Sheppard Act, and the process of bringing new operators into the program.

#### **THE RANDOLPH-SHEPPARD ACT**

- Mr. Schmidlkofer cited "The Randolph-Sheppard Act, as amended, was enacted to provide individuals who are blind with remunerative employment and to enhance their economic well-being. Through Randolph-Sheppard Act (R-SA) programs, individuals who are blind and in need of employment are given priority in the operation of vending facilities on federal property. Typically, individuals who are blind and receive R-SA program contracts act as managers of vending facilities, subcontracting with food service organizations that provide meal and/or vending services on a day-to-day basis."

"Since its inception, the R-SA has extended its reach beyond federal locations to include state, county, municipal, and private installations. The 1974 amendments to the R-SA added cafeterias to its list of eligible "vending facilities". Congress, however, did not specify whether military mess-halls should be treated as "Cafeterias" in the context of the R-SA. This issue raised concerns about conflicts between the programs authorized by R-SA and another program that addresses employment of individuals who are blind,

Ability-One. Ability-One is a statutorily mandated procurement program developed under the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act (JWOD Act) that promotes employment opportunities for persons who are blind or severely disabled. “

“In FY2007, a total of 2,545 individuals who are blind operated 3,031 Randolph-Sheppard vending facilities, generating \$713.2 million in gross income, with average vendor earnings of \$46,963. This report provides a brief history of the R-SA programs and an explanation of how the programs are structured.”

“To implement an R-SA program within a state, a state licensing agency (SLA) is responsible for recruiting, training, and licensing individuals who are blind or have a vision impairment to manage vending facilities. SLA's, by definition, are entities that provide vocational rehabilitation services to persons who are blind, such as job counseling or training, information and referral, and job search assistance.”

“SLA's administer Randolph-Sheppard Programs at the state level where these programs are most commonly referred to as “business enterprise programs”. In contrast, the U.S. Dept. of Education refers to them as “vending facility programs” for individuals who are blind. The R-SA requires that each participating state empower an elected committee to help inform and direct the work of its SLA. As a result, policies for Randolph-Sheppard programs may vary from state to state.”

#### **RECRUITMENT/ ENROLLMENT/ TRAINING OF BEP VENDORS**

- Mr. Schmidtkofer stated that the path for an individual who is blind to become a BEP Licensed vendor begins with the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselor. The Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI) recommends that individuals go through the VR program to be referred to BEP. The BEP Director shall review potential candidates and communicate with the VR Counselors and clients to ensure the referral is appropriate for the BEP program. The VR Counselors make referrals of qualified clients who are interested in careers as BEP licensed blind vendors to the BEP Director. The minimum criteria for referral are:
  - A. Certified as legally Blind by an Ophthalmologist or Optometrist
    - No more than 20/200 central visual acuity in the better eye with corrective lenses;
    - An equally disabling loss of vision, as evidenced by a limitation to the field of vision in the better eye to such a degree that its widest diameter subtends an angle of no greater than 20 degrees;
  - B. Minimum 18 years of age (Internships may begin as early as 16);
  - C. Credit Check (Equifax, Experian, or Transunion accepted) to assure no prior defaults, bankruptcies, or significant outstanding debts that would prevent the potential vendor from operating a business;
  - D. A standardized interview with the VR Counselor, an SLA representative, and 2 licensed blind vendors;

- E. Demonstrated 8<sup>th</sup> grade math and reading levels as evidenced by results of standardized assessment results. If an individual does NOT meet these academic performance levels a meeting with the Division's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Unit will be scheduled to determine if remediation would be available to a potential candidate.
- F. Review of Psychological, medical, and vocational evaluations with VR counselor, as well as a state and federal criminal background check with no confirmed felonies that would prohibit placement into a State Licensing Agency (SLA) established facility;
- G. Ability to perform the physical requirements of operating a BEP facility (reasonable accommodations apply);
- H. TB Test with confirmed negative results. In addition to the above, the client shall be subject to a reference check and registry review as indicated below:
  - **NSOPW** (National Sex Offender Registry Base)
  - <http://pubsrv.deljis.delaware.gov/wantedpublic> (Delaware criminal justice information system- wanted person review)
  - <http://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dltcrp/Default.aspx> (DHSS Adult Abuse Registry Check)

## **TRAINING**

- Mr. Schmidtkofer stated that training is an on-going process divided into 3 phases; classroom training, on-the-job (OTJ) training, and post training. He briefly spoke about the training process- and explained that each individuals training needs are customized to their specific business.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There were no questions from the attendees or the public and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

*Amber M. Mangini*